

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

April 19, 2005, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Natural Resources Building, Room 175, Olympia

Attendees:

- Fish and Wildlife: Peter Birch, John Carleton, Margen Carlson, and Bob Zeigler
- Governor's Salmon Recovery Office: Phil Miller
- Association of Washington Cities: Jackie White
- Washington State Association of Counties: Andy Meyer, Maureen Morris
- HDR/EES: Rick Anderson
- Transportation: Barb Aberle, Dick Gersib, Gary Davis, Steve Thompson, and Tim Hilliard

Updates:

- Barb Aberle updated us on the TPEAC meeting. They were briefed on Watershed Subcommittee Activities, given a presentation on the GIS Workbench system at WSDOT, a discussion was begun on what permits would have been needed if the "commerce corridor" (alternate to I-5) had been built, it was announced that there will be a multi-state streamlining presentation, with Washington included, at the IOCET conference in August. Jackie White reported on shorelines. They also were updated on the Regional Fish Enhancement Groups project, and \$7,000 was added so that Walla Walla watershed could be included to represent east-side watersheds.
- Barb briefly discussed the certification of the North Fork Newaukum Mitigation Bank, a project she worked on for six years.
- Barb also updated us on the RFEG contract. The six basins are now Nooksack, Stillaguamish, South Sound, Hood Canal, Lower Columbia, and Walla Walla.

They sent us a spreadsheet which is their draft prioritization model; Bob Zeigler will pass the electronic version on to the whole subcommittee.

If possible, review the spreadsheet and send comments to Sheila North before May 10 – also, please send a CC to Dick Gersib. Addresses:

Sheila: sheilanorth@yahoo.com, Dick: gersibd@wsdot.wa.gov

- Darrell Phare wasn't able to come to the meeting and asked Tim Hilliard to pass on some information for him. He has been hearing that some representatives of Tribes are concerned about aspects of the RFEG contract. Some of the concerns he has heard:
 - Are RFEGs the best groups to do this work? Might have been more prudent to spend more time to determine who is the best group.
 - Told that the Tribes will have input during "test" of product – old way of doing things - like to be considered during development phase.
 - Unclear how existing tribal data will be accessed and included in product.
 - Tribes should be intimately involved with mitigation

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

- Statewide process neglects interests of individual Tribes
- Unclear what technical expertise RFEGs have to develop model or determine how mitigation funds best spent
- Model needs to determine loss of habitat and productivity and cumulative effects

Barb noted that tribes are involved in lead entities and the RFEGs are coordinating with lead entities. Dick added that Lorna Smith from Snohomish County called with similar concerns re coordination with counties. He will coordinate with Sheila North, Darrell, and Lorna.

- Tim also passed on that Darrell continues to work on issues related to the SR-539 watershed pilot with Rick Anderson. He has set up a meeting with the Lummi Tribe and hope to meet with the Nooksack Tribe soon as well. He also arranged a March 31 meeting between Lummi staff and WSDOT staff. A meeting with WSDOT and the Nooksack Tribe is also in the works.
- Rick Anderson updated us on the SR-539 watershed pilot project in Whatcom County. As Darrell noted, coordination with the tribes is underway; also they are working with the lead entity and the RFEG. He noted that a “lesson learned” is that the toughest part of the process is communication – getting everyone together and talking. They have assembled a county / WRIA – wide list of projects, but putting more emphasis on the smaller scale – the creeks around the project, including Bertrand and Fifteenmile creeks. By the end of this week the short lists should be evaluated. He noted the area has good planning, including ahead of schedule on Critical Areas update and Shorelines update.
- Rick Anderson updated us on the US-12 watershed pilot project in Walla Walla County. They just had a 2-day meeting, looked at areas and issues. A preferred route will be chosen by October; still looking at existing route and the new northern alignment. North has least impact on regulated resources, but impacts the rare shrub-steppe habitat. Also, there would be issues related to being a completely new alignment.
- Dick Gersib updated us on the watershed screening tool. An unexpected personnel change at WSDOT has slowed the project. More later.
- Dick Gersib also gave a quick update on the SR-167 watershed characterization project. He noted that for the first time the relationship between the project team and the watershed characterization technical team is great. There are two more corridor studies underway in the study area – SR-164 and SR-169 – so we WSDOT should be able to leverage the findings in more than one highway project.
- Dick briefly mentioned Keller Farm, a potential mitigation bank area that was prioritized high on the list of sites generated by the I-405 / SR-520 watershed characterization project. This site at the confluence of Bear and Evans Creeks in Redmond could be a wonderful opportunity to match environmental benefits and transportation mitigation needs. WSDOT is looking at using the mitigation for wetland mitigation as well as stormwater flow control needs.
- Margen Carlson updated us on the mitigation optimization effort. They are still in the phase where they are clarifying the direction they will go in, exploring the concept, and expanding the participation. Next they want to do outreach, identify more detailed issues to address,

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

and consider pilot tests. Last would be pilots – still a long way off but already the ports are interested.

- Phil Miller updated us on what is going on in the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. They are working to integrate the grass-roots efforts around the state. Legislation in the hopper; it looks like only modest changes will come of it. A bill extended the Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery Board sunset until 2010, and some version of bill S-5610 (increasing the visibility of regional groups) will likely pass.

Barb Aberle on TPEAC Progress Report:

Barb called the off-line workgroup the “vision report panel.” She says this end-of-biennium report is the biggest report since the December report is just a half-year report and the final report will be after the TPEAC has reached its sunset. She had feedback that the last report was boring, and thinks this one needs more spark. Megan White has asked for outcomes and products, numbers, a clear vision. Jackie White and Rick Anderson think it should address issues beyond WSDOT, beyond TPEAC – where can the results lead, what other groups can use them? Barb sees the report as having four main parts:

1. Setting the stage: Why we are doing this, what return does the legislature get for their investment?
2. Discuss products, with relationship to streamlining.
3. Vision: what happens next, how will this impact practices in WSDOT, regulatory agencies, beyond?
4. Lessons learned: what are they, how can they be applied within and outside of WSDOT, beyond mitigation even (restoration work for example).

Dick asked, “where are the WOWs!” and “What are the building blocks for the future?” The “wows” might be watershed characterizations, screening tool, pilots. How does RFEG project fit in?

We are looking at 10 – 15 pages including the executive summary. Jackie, Rick and Maureen will work on giving shape to the report. They will look at the wows and come to others as needed. If you have preliminary ideas, get them to Barb by April 27. Barb will pull together, Jackie, Rick and Maureen will help clean up the final version. Some dates: Deadline for TPEAC handouts is June 13, report due to legislature.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 17, in the Natural Resources Building, Room 537 (Fish and Wildlife Director's Conference Room). Subject will be JUST the report, with a possible exception for a short piece on the RFEG project. The June meeting will be changed to address the conflict with TPEAC, and we will strive to find a room for Tuesday June 14 – a week early.

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned 2:30 PM.